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ABSTRACT

This presentation is a brief summary of a book published in Swedish, "Kulturensbarn--Children of Culture." This book is a doctoral thesis which sought to investigate how cultural values, value systems, and norms influence children, which values are transmitted, and how they can be analyzed. The study employed data from families in the Indian state of Orissa and from Sweden. In Sweden, researchers questioned seven families from a group of reindeer herding Lapps and four families from among the religious sect of Laestadians. Interviews were conducted with young people, politicians, child psychologists, and teachers; children were administered questionnaires; and youth in Sweden and India wrote essays. Two types of results emerged. One type dealt with the identification of cultural patterns and how researchers could describe the patterns with the help of underlying structures and elements. The other type dealt with identifying which patterns were most obvious, how researchers could analyze them, and how patterns might harmonize or oppose each other. (SG)

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CHILDREN OF CULTURE

Gudrun Ekstrand

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This presentation is a brief summary of a book published in Swedish (Ekstrand, G. *Kulturens barn.* /Children of Culture./ Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990. Pp. 304.) The book is a doctoral thesis which attempts to investigate how cultural values, value systems and norms influence children; which values are transmitted; and how they can be analysed. The investigation is based on data from the state of Orissa in India and from Sweden. The primary group of informants consists of 50 families in each country. In Sweden, 7 families from a group of reindeer-herding Lapps and 4 families among the religious sect of Laestadians have also been studied. Interviews have been made with young people, politicians, child psychologists, teachers etc. Children have been given questionnaires and youth in Sweden and India have written essays. Two types of results have emerged. One type deals with the identification of cultural patterns, and how these can be described with the help of underlying structures and elements. The other type of results deals with identifying which patterns are most obvious and clearcut, how they can be analysed, and how patterns may harmonize or oppose each other.

Key words: Child rearing, cross-cultural studies, cultural differences, cultural patterns, cultural values, culture, family, India, interview, Laestadians, Lapps, parent aspiration, parent attitudes, qualitative analysis, socialization, Sweden.

CHILDREN OF CULTURE

I The problem and its setting

The behavioral sciences have always taken an interest in differences between people. While early research ascribed the differences to hereditary factors, later research sought the causes in individual differences, in social, societal or in political conditions.

The present study attempts to investigate how cultural values, value systems and norms affect children, which values are transmitted, and how they can be analyzed.

1 Some questions

The overriding aim of this study is to map cultural factors that influence children´s development. More specific questions related to this aim are the following. What are the cultural norms and values in different countries? How do individuals raised in different cultures differ? What methods exist to observe, register and describe cultural patterns? Can the cultural norms and values for child rearing be made visible? Can these norms and values be traced even in children?

2 The aims of the study

In order to answer these questions, a contrastive approach seemed necessary. To study how people think, feel and act, especially regarding children, several different cultures must be studied. The comprehensive aim of the study includes certain partial aims as follows; (a) to find suitable methods for collecting data, handle the data and interpret the meaning of data. (b) to map what cultural norms and values determine our behavior and what hidden patterns determine our attitudes to children and child rearing. (c) to

juxtapose cultures and groups in such a way that these hidden patterns become visible.

3 Three stages in the research

The research which lasted from the end of 1981 to the end of 1989 can be divided into the following three periods: (a) the initial stage; (b) the stage of search and trial; (c) the stage of contrasting and comparing.

The first period consisted of acquiring information about methodology; of understanding culture in general, especially patterns in India; of consulting experts; of aquiring technical equipment, such as video and audio tape recorders and cameras. The second period consisted of searching and trying. Interviews and other data collecting were performed. Methodological and epistemological developments were achieved. Data posed continuously new questions, rather than providing answers. Other cultures than India and the majority population in Sweden were introduced for further contrast, viz. reindeerherding Lapps, and the religious sect of Laestadians, both groups in northern Sweden.

II Method

1 Regions of study

The investigation is based on data collections in India and Sweden. In India, all the informants come from the state of Orissa, mainly the cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, and a number of villages around these cities. In Sweden, the informants come from four areas, viz. (1) the city of Malmö in southern Sweden, close to Denmark (population 250.000); (2) an area in the archipelago outside the city of Karlskrona in south-eastern Sweden, with a population of fishermen and workers; (3) the Torne river valley on the border of Finland in northern Sweden, consisting mainly of forest land with a population primarily composed of workers; (4) Lappish villages in the very north of Sweden, in the mountains, close to the border of Norway.

2 Subjects

The primary group of informants consists of families in the various cultures. In India and Sweden, 50 families have been studied in each country. Among reindeerherding Lapps, 7 families have been interviewed, and among the religious sect of Laestadians, 4 families have been interviewed. In addition several hundreds of informants have been studied by means of a variety of methods.

In India, the families have been selected so that all the major castes and SES groups are represented. The selection has been made so as to yield as large a dispersion as possible regarding occupations and education. With respect to religion, Hindus, Muslims and Christians are represented. There is an over-representation of upper socio-economic groups, intentionally done because these groups have been able to give the most comprehensive, detailed and nuanced information regarding culture and traditions.

The Lappish informants are all reindeer-herding, i.e. semi-nomadic. They live in towns during the winter, but move to the summer villages early in the spring and back in the late autumn. Nowadays, they follow the reindeer by snowscooter, aeroplane and helicopter. The Laestadian informants are mostly small-scale farmers and workers, but also an occasional teacher.

Besides the families, interviews have been made with separate individuals, such as young people, politicians, trade union representatives, child psychologists, representatives of medical care, and other experts and professionals. Groups of teachers, teacher trainees, college students and children have been given questionnaires. Youth in Sweden and India have written essays.

In all, close to 1,000 informants have participated in the study.

3 Epistemological considerations

An important principle into the research process has been to understand the meaning of statements in interviews and other instruments. Another important principle has been to combine paradigms, in this case the nomothetic and interpretative. A third overriding principle has been to direct methodology and data collecting so as to catch as much as possible of

thinking, feeling and acting, and to exclude as little as possible. This was done in order to get as broad a basis for the interpretation of meaning as possible. A fourth principle has been not to let any theory direct the process. Instead, certain new theoretical models have been developed, so far in the epistemological and metamethodological areas.

The typical process has been to collect broad sets of statements, then to interpret these, and build nomothetic analyses on the data to obtain structures. The structures found have been guiding, but not determining for the third stage, viz. a new process of interpretation.

Among the epistemological/metamethodological developments may be mentioned a structured model of the emic/etic concepts, a model for levels of cultural resolution, an integrated model of elements, structures, patterns and rules, and a discussion of aspects on cross-cultural comparability. These have been separately published elsewhere, and are fairly briefly mentioned in the present study.

4 Instruments

A primary method of data collecting has been the interview. However, in order to fulfil the desire of a broad scope of information, a specific type, the *extended interview* has been developed. The extended interview means that several members of a family may be interviewed, that the interviews may be combined with videotaping and other observations, that respondents may be interviewed again after a certain time, that observations of the totality of the informants' situation may be performed, for instance by visiting the home villages, etc. Also conventional interviews have been done. In addition, essays, questionnaires, and specially constructed instruments, as well as observations have been employed.

III Results

Two types of results have emerged. One type deals with the identification of certain cultural patterns, and how these can be described with the help of underlying structures and elements. The other type deals with identifying

which patterns are most obvious and clearcut, how they can be analysed, and how patterns may harmonize or oppose each other.

An example of the first type of result is the pattern of Independence. This pattern was originally identified in the Swedish material. There is an Indian equivalent of a different nature, which I will call "Indian Independence".

The Swedish pattern of Independence can be described in terms of four structures: (a) Independence towards authorities; (b) The ability to take care of oneself; (c) To have an opinion and have the courage to declare it; (d) To be active.

Each of these structures is supported by elements in the shape of a variety of statements and observations with a certain degree of variation.

Indian Independence is composed of three very different structures, to some extent the very opposite of what in Sweden is meant by Independence: (a) To develop one's capacity; (b) To be a resource; (c) To be one's parents' parent.

Swedish Independence has synonyms such as self-reliance, self-supportiveness, autonomy, etc., and is in other words an individualistic independence. In contrast, Indian Independence has a social dimension, with synonyms such as inter-dependence of strength. Indian Independence consists of being independent in one's thoughts and of being able to stand on one's own legs. The children are trained to become authorities through learning to obey authorities when they are small. Later on, they will have to be able to care for their family, their children and their parents.

On the other hand, Lappish Independence is not opposed to obedience and authority, as in the Swedish pattern. Independence is equivalent to Freedom, and Freedom means to be free from obstacles that prevent the Lapp from following his herd over the mountains. The Lapp must be able to cope with the forces of nature, to command his body and the situation, and to survive under difficult circumstances. The Lapps do not consider the Swedes to be independent. Swedes, the Lapps say, are dependent on being like everyone else, they are afraid to expose their individualism, and they are highly dependent on societal authorities and services.

The other type of result is to identity the most clearcut or strong pattern. The Swedish material indicates two patterns as particularly obvious, viz. Independence and Feelings. The Indian material indicates Obedience and Duty as strong and typical patterns. However, through the contrastive

technique a Swedish pattern of Obedience, and Indian patterns of Feelings and Independence have been demonstrated.

Finally, there is a discussion of how individuals are socialized into their culture as individuals, group members, and members of society. There is a different stress on each level in different cultures. This is a result that was not asked for in interviews of instruments, but emerged as a result of the contrastive interpretations.

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